

Appl. No. 09/867,893
Amendment and/or Response
Reply to Office action of 14 May 2004

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REMARKS / DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Claims 1-13 are pending in the application. Claims 7-13 are newly added. No new matter is introduced.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge receipt of certified copies of all the priority documents.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to state whether the drawings are acceptable.

The Abstract is replaced to conform to U.S. patent practice.

The applicants thank the Examiner for providing information about recommended section headings in the specification. However, the applicants respectfully decline to add section headings, as they are not required in accordance with MPEP 608.01(a).

Claims 1-6 are amended for non-statutory reasons: to correct one or more informalities, remove figure label numbers, and/or to replace European-style claim phraseology with American-style claim language. The claims are not narrowed in scope and no new matter is added.

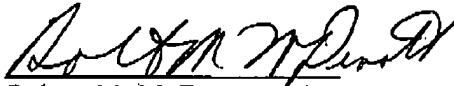
The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thueringer et al. (USP 6,507,130, hereinafter Thueringer) in view of Doittau et al. (USP 3,790,890). The Thueringer patent was filed on 27 October 1999 and issued on 14 January 2003, during which time this invention was filed, and therefore is available as prior art under 35 U.S.C. 102(e). Above is a statement of common ownership of the Thueringer patent and this application at the time that this invention was made, as required by 35 U.S.C. 103(c) to disqualify the Thueringer patent from being used in a rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

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In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of record, allow all the pending claims, and find the application to be in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue that may best be resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert M. McDermott, Attorney
Registration Number 41,508
patents@lawyer.com

1824 Federal Farm Road
Montross, VA 22520
Phone: 804-493-0707
Fax: 215-243-7525